

To the Appropriations Committee re: DEEP cuts

The cuts to DEEP are a serious curtailment in our quality of life in our state.

1. All efforts should be made to keep our state parks open and staffed. Proper use of entrance fees could accomplish much of this. That they are net income producers through tourism is only an addition to the pleasure that they provide as well as education about the outdoors.
2. Further reducing the already decimated staff of DEEP leaves the health and safety of our citizens at risk. In addition environmental health and its attendant benefits will continue to decline especially as the federal government is unlikely to fill any gaps. The activities of DEEP are not transferable to local jurisdictions so only its continued funding can be counted on.
3. The council on environmental quality is a symbol of the state's commitment to its environment. Its very valuable annual report and support that can be obtained from its office is a mainstay for the environmental community. Given its minuscule budget, its elimination is a great example of being penny wise and pound foolish.

Respectfully submitted, Benjamin Oko Member of Ridgefield Connection Conservation Commission, member of Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership, member of Forsetry Advisory Council for the State member of board, Audubon Connecticut.

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